SAINT ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

SUVA, FIJI
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Produced by PawPaw P.R. for St Andrews Centenary Committee.
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At first glance, the quaint wooden church nestled amid the foliage on the Gordon and Goodenough Street corner in Suva seems aloof from the mainstream bustle of the road outside and the busy hotels opposite.

Yet through its congregation, St Andrews Presbyterian Church has been an unobtrusive centre for social and economic leadership and gentle change in Fiji and the South Pacific for just on a century.

Members of its congregation over the years have woven a rich tapestry of personalities and events integral to the history of Fiji and the region.

And the church which began as the spiritual home for many of Fiji's early businessmen and plantation owners is developing as the major English-speaking church in Fiji with a multiracial congregation from across the breadth of the Pacific.

It is also, like the region, the subject of accelerating social change as it moves to meet the diverse needs of its congregation from Fiji and the other South Seas islands.

While periodically it has maintained close links with the Presbyterian churches in Scotland, Melbourne, and latterly, Auckland, the church has developed a unique role — catering to a Pacific congregation which has changed over the decades from being predominantly white to the current composition where more than seventy per cent of its members are from Pacific island heritages.

And through its increasingly close links with the University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Theological College, the Methodist Church and the Fiji Council of Churches, St Andrews is now mapping a new course for growth and adaptation relevant to Fiji and the region.

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In assembling this brief look at St Andrews history, grateful thanks are due to the Sir Alport Barker Library of *The Fiji Times* and the Fiji National Achives.

While St Andrews is an extra territorial parish of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, and is in structure 'Presbyterian', the emphasis on denomination an attraction has vitually disappeared given the developing nature of its congregation as a multi-cultural group drawn from a variety of traditions.

Church Opened September 29, 1883.

The new Presbyterian Church at Suva was formally opened for public worship on Sunday last.

Speaking of the edifice, the Suva Times says: "The interior of the building does not belie the exterior, and is very neatly and comfortably fitted up. It is well lit and the colour of the walls has been chosen so as to give the building a light and pleasant appearance.

"Ventilation, such an important matter in this climate, has been thoroughly attended to; and the result altogether is one with which the Presbyterian body may feel very great satisfaction.

"The church has been built to seat 150 persons with ease, this size being deemed quite ample for the requirements of one denomination in the present position of Suva."

Reproduced from *The Fiji Times* Centenury Issue 1969.

SOME VIEWS ON ST ANDREWS

These views on St Andrews past and present were presented to the congregation during worship on Sunday, July 31, 1983 and represent a melding of diverse backgrounds into common interest between members who have grown up with the church and others who have adopted it as their own. The service was broadcast nationally through Radio Fiji.

I come from Niue Island and at present am a student at the Pacific Theological College in Suva.

I have been a member of St Andrews Church for nearly three years. I see St Andrews as my spiritual home, which I share with friends from all over the Pacific, and from countries beyond the Pacific. St Andrews is unique, in the sense that so many countries are represented to make up her body.

Faith in Jesus Christ is expressed in different cultural forms — in singing, praying, preaching, sharing and so forth. Yet, with all our differences, we are united under one name — the name of Jesus Christ — sharing in one faith.

The flexibility of St Andrews' order of worship and her structure give us opportunities to share and participate.

St Andrews' doors are always open to strangers, students, and all who wish to make her their place of worship. St Andrews has in so many ways reached out, not only in prayers, but in her actions to the communities in Fiji and to the world as a whole.

This is the character of St Andrews Church throughout her history. This quality, I believe, springs from that very old story, the Good News of God in Jesus Christ - the very essence of St Andrews' faith.

I pray that St Andrews Church will always remain the body that always struggles to share the very core of the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God, where strangers, students and people of all races are always accepted, where they unite, and where they are made whole.

Pahetogia Faitala

What does it mean to me — this Church of St Andrews that has stood on this site for one hundred years?

What does it mean to me, this little old wooden building that the people of Suva think is architectually quaint?

It has been the spiritual home of my family going back from my children, five generations.

On my mother's side, my great grandfather, David Wilkinson — who is recorded as being one of the great men in Fiji's history — worshipped, and as a lay preacher, preached here.

A cousin of my mother, Robyn Archer — who became Government Printer to the King of Tonga — pumped the organ and was a choir boy here around 1904.

My aunt, Grace Wilkinson, played the organ at St Andrews over a period of fifty years, from 1918, and my mother, in her young days, was in the choir.

My father, on one of his visits from Raki Raki attended St Andrews Church, saw this young girl in the choir, and fell in love with her.

On my father's side, my grandfather, Thomas Burness, attended St Andrews when in Suva from Raki Raki. He was a tough Scot who brought the name of the family of the Bard of Scotland to this land. When I was a child, old timers used to tell me they always knew when he was in church because his singing would drown out all others.

For nearly fifty years St Andrews has been my church. The first minister I have recollection of was here during the early 1940s. I remember his blood and thunder pulpit thumping type sermons which put the fear of God into me as a child.

The congregation in those days was mostly permanent residents of Suva. They and my family had a great influence on my getting taught my Christian principles. The teachers who stand out in my mind seemed to me to be large ladies in dark dresses, with hats, stockings and gloves, and who sat very erect holding large Fijian fans. If we were lucky we would get an occasional flick of a fan our way to give us brief relief from the heat.

These people seemed to me to follow a straight and narrow path of righteous living and heaven help anybody who fell from that narrow way.

So this is why St Andrews is the place I get my spiritual food, where I get my conscience pricked, where I go to find peace, and where I go to get my 'batteries' charged each Sunday so that I can go out into the world and try to be a Christian for another week.

Don Burness

When St Andrews Church was newly built, my great grandmother, Petrie, used to come to worship here.

My own parents were Anglican and Wesleyan, which is probably why they were married by a Presbyterian minister. I was born at Suva Point, christened Presbyterian, but brought up as an Anglican. In 1945 I married a Scottish Presbyterian in the old Anglican cathedral.

It did not take me long to learn that my husband was a much better church goer than I was, and so we joined St Andrews Church.

I must have been a naughty child, because I grew up with a dreadful fear of school teachers and ministers of religion. Doctors and dentists were bad enough but teachers and ministers were really scary people!

I only overcame that fear when as a young bride I took a trip to Levuka. In those days my husband was the District Officer Lau and Lomaiviti and spent his time travelling around, while I stayed at home with the children. But on this occasion it was his birthday and I was to meet him in Levuka to help celebrate it.

I sailed from Londoni on the ferry 'Jubilee'. On board was the Presbyterian minister and his wife. Once out at sea it was very rough indeed, and I was sick all the way to Levuka. As the Reverend McDiarmid and his wife held me out over the side of the good ship 'Jubilee', he patted my back and said 'I hope that that young man realises what you're suffering for him.'

From then on ministers of religion became very human people and St Andrews church a very friendly place to be.

However, I was not asked to talk about myself but rather what St Andrews means to me.

It is a familiar landmark which I don't like to picture Suva without. Besides being the place where my great grandmother in her little lace bonnet and many other her friends and relatives used to come to worship. It means the place where six of our own children were christened and four of them were married.

I must say though, when I think of St Andrews I also think of a lot of bother!

Can you imagine Sunday morning in our house when half a dozen small boys had to be got ready for church? Socks and

shoes were fought over and there was even a period when ties were worn to church. On the way down to church somebody usually knocked over the flower arrangement meant for the church and tempers were frayed.

After the service, there had to be a cooling-off period when we drove down to the 'Golden Dragon' for ice creams all round.

Sometimes, I think that St Andrews must have floated down to Goodenough Street on a sea of jams, jellies, pickles, plants, old clothes, cakes and marmalade that all had to be made and sold — but joking apart, I like the variety in St Andrews.

I suppose because of my own mixed background, I am glad that people of many denominations feel comfortable in St Andrews.

I feel privileged to belong to a church where ministers of many different churches have come to preach.

I am proud that in Fiji St Andrews has been a moving force in the eucumenical movement.

I am glad that with the formation of the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Theological College, more people from around the Pacific have found their way to St Andrews — because, for me, St Andrews is the place where I seek, and try to find — I knock and hope to be let in. And I thank St Andrews for helping me on the way.

Nancy Thomson

IN THE BEGINNING

The first real move towards a Presbyterian church in Fiji occured in 1876 when the Presbyerian Church of New Zealand, commissioned the Reverend C. Stewart Ross to travel to the islands to 'make full inquiry regarding the spiritual wants of the Presbyterian settlers there and the best means of supplying them ... the outcome of urgent appeals by planters and traders settled in the islands for the establishment among them of Presbyterian Ordinances'.

Ross' visit to Fiji was financed by W. Thomson of James McEwan and Company, of Melbourne who had large interests in Fiji at the time and who offered passage on a small sailing ship from Melbourne to Levuka.

His later account of his visit, which includes reflections on Fiji in the late nineteenth century and is reproduced in part from *Churches and Church men in Fiji,* is a fascinating account of life at the time and a commentary on the social and moral attitudes of the European settlers. His account shows how the work of the various Christain denominations was becoming inextricably intertwined with the colonial development of the islands. His observations of the Fijians in Ovalau who rowed out to meet the arriving ship was that 'their clothing although scant, was clean and neat and they had an aspect of intelligence which the others lacked'.

Ross' first meetings in Fiji, redolant of the early congregation of the church, was at the home of Lieutenant Woods where he met 'some of the leading businessmen of Levuka, all of whom expressed their great satisfaction at the prospect of a Presbyterian Minister in the Colony.' We had 'very pleasant intercourse with the Hon. J.B. Thurston and his brother, Mr Harry Thurston, both of whom professed to be much interested in the object of my visit to the islands.'

But during the meeting a conflict between the church's nineteenth century attitudes and the practicality of a local planter quickly surfaced.

> A planter introduced himself to me, a nephew, I was told, of an English admiral. He wanted tracts for distribution among his people.
>
> 'You are interested in their welfare,' I asked?
>
> 'Oh, yes,' he replied, 'I built a church at my own cost for their benefit — I'm not a religious man,' he added with beautiful candour, 'but I like to see people religious.'
>
> Then, after some talk about the natives whose Christianity, he affirmed, was a mere veneer without any background or basis of deep conviction, he said, 'I want you to do me a favour'.
>
> 'Well, what is it,' I asked.

'I want you to marry me to a Fijian woman.

'Impossible,' I replied, 'I am not authorised to solemnise marriages in this Colony. Apply to Mr Robson.'

'Never,' he replied, 'I'll never ask him to do it. But Mr Thurston is here and he will give you the needed authorisation.'

'No!' I insisted, 'you must ask the missionary.'

'Well,' he said, 'will you baptise my children?'

'I'm sorry I can't . Your marriage must precede the baptism.'

'There, now,' was his pensive reply, 'I want to be put right and you refuse to help me.'

I found on inquiry that his own misconduct had brought him into conflict with the missionary who, in spite of all past differences, would have been pleased to do what he could to rescue him from his evil life.

Ross was deeply impressed with Thurston, whom he described as being 'a prominent figure in the public life of the islands and possessing the unfaltering confidence of Thakombau (sic), his practical wisdom had inspired and his hand had guided the movement that issued in Cession to the British Crown.' On Thurston's personality, Stewart Ross spoke of 'his courage, firmness and unfailing resourcefulness abundantly evident in times of political disquiet and stress; his profound sympathy with the native race and strenuous endeavours to conserve their interest which 'exposed him at times to the hostility of a few who failed to understand his attitude and the lofty aims he had set before him.'

Ross's account of his visit also covered the political situation at the time. On the Tui Viti's conversion to Christianity, he wrote:

Thakombau's conversion was due to the influence of King George of Tonga, who, after a visit which he made to him, wrote a letter urging him to embrace the Christian faith. The Tui Viti had suffered many reverses. The whites were in league against him, and openly avowed their purpose to depose him; the Rewa chief took measures to invade his Capital and crush his power. The pressure of these outward troubles led him to give ear to King George's counsels; and, to the great joy of Missionaries Calvert and Waterhouse, and of many more besides, he announced his purpose to break with the old dark past and to accept the teachings of Christianity. The day on which Thakombau lotu'd was one of joy and thanksgiving to all who were interested in the progress of Mission work.

Ross was clearly impressed also at the activities of other denominations and wrote that he had seen 'enough to convince me that the Methodist Mission had accomplished a work of vast importance among the native population of the islands' with the enrolment of some thirty thousand members and a large body of adherents with churches or meeting houses in nearly every village and Fijian language education for twenty five thousand children in weekday mission schools.

> Always quick to note influences that would tell disastrously upon the people, the agents of the Mission viewed with anxiety the introduction, in the interests of the sugar plantations, of Coolie labour from India. The Coolies brought with them their heathen faith and immoral practices, the gross vices and novel diseases which might thus touch with tainting power the Fijians who came into close contact with them. Thes formed, they believed, a standing menace to the Mission, which immediate steps were taken either to counteract or remove. Application was therefore made to the Wesleyan Missionaries in India, for a native agent who was familiar with Urdu, the language spoken by the Coolie immigrants. John Williams, an Indian Christian, was therefore engaged to labour among the Coolies who were located on the Rewa, and in the neighbourhood of Suva.

Ross had similar fullsome praise for the fledgling but robust Roman Catholic and Anglican missions in Fiji and the quick spread of Christianity through the islands. It was against this background that a public meeting on the formation of a Presbyterian Church in Fiji was held on May 1, 1876. *The Fiji Times* reported:

> A public meeting of those who are favourable to the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Fiji, was held on Monday night, in the Good Templar's Hall, Levuka. On the motion of Mr. M. Wilson seconded by Mr. Hetherington, the Hon. J.B. Thurston occupied the chair. The chairman explained the object for which the meeting had been convened, referred to the work of evangelization of the native population which had been carried on for years by the Wesleyan Missionary in the face of difficulty and peril, and to the efforts put forth by the Church of England, as well as by the Wesleyan Church, to meet the spiritual necessities of a growing European population. He adverted briefly to the Mission work of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in New Hebrides, and regarded it as a sign of healthful vitality in the New Zealand churches as well as in the Church of Scotland, that they should follow with interest ...
>
> The Rev. C.S. Ross, from New Zealand, was introduced by the champ, and explained to the meeting the object of his visit to Fiji... He stated that the Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand made hearty and thankful recognition of the services done to the interests of Christianity by the Wesleyan Mission in Fiji, and that this movement on their part was designed, in supplying a clearly expressed want, to harmonise with Christian action on the part of other denominations already established here, rather than to enter needlessly on a field already well and fully occupied.
>
> Mr. Hetherington spoke of the enthusiastic manner in which the matter had been taken up here. He had brought the subscription list under the notice of only a few, and everyone had responded in the heartiest manner, and expressed his gratification at the prospect of the speedy settlement of a Presbyterian minister in Fiji.

A committee was elected for the establishment of a church and an appeal for funds was launched, with an initial 'cheerful and liberal' response.

But interest in the establishment of a Presbyterian Church at the former capital of Levuka 'waned before questions of burning importance which engrossed the thought of the colonists,' Ross wrote.

The change in Fiji's capital to Suva was made in 1880 and the new town grew rapidly.

Presbyterians in Suva attended the fortnightly Anglican services held at the Suva courthouse but in 1882 'made a vigorous effort to proceed with a church of their own order', Ross reported.

THE EARLY CHURCH

The history of St Andrews goes back to the days when Suva was little more than a seaside village where the European population numbered only a few hundred.

The first records maintained by the church report the meeting on January 16, 1883 of a small, self-appointed committee in the Suva schoolhouse to consider providing a Presbyterian place of worship in the town. Those present, Messrs MacGregor, Murchie, Paul, Robertson, Eyres, McHarg, Rattenbury, Dulfer, Wood and Duncan agreed 'that it is desirable that a Church for the purpose of Presbyterian form of worship should be erected without delay on the (current) property kindly granted for that purpose by W.K. Thomson esq. of the firm of Jas. McEwan and Co.'

The trustees named in the Certificate of Title of the property were Messrs Robertson (as president) MacGregor and Murchie.

A general committee was appointed for the 'collection of subscriptions and other financial measures necessary for the erection of the church'.

From then on, apart from the 'unavoidable' postponement of the next (January 23, 1883) meeting through the arrival of a ship, fundraising began in earnest and the money rolled in from the settlers in Fiji and their host churches in Scotland, New Zealand and Australia.

Rev. Ross reported in his later account of the church's development that:

> . . . a suitable site was gifted by Messrs. James McEwan & Co., and Mr. W. K. Thomson, of the firm, subscribed 100 pounds towards the building fund. That was an incentive to more strenuous endeavour on their part. It was proposed to erect a church capable of accommodating 250 persons at a cost of 650 pounds. Of that amount 200 pounds had been locally subscribed, though the Presbyterian element in the population at Suva was comparatively small.
>
> In February, 1883, Mr. A. Duncan, hon. secretary of the Committee, appealed to Otago for help both to build the Church and to maintain religious ordinances. When that application was formally submitted to the Dunedin Presbytery, Mr. Edmund Smith and the Rev. C. S. Ross were authorised to receive subscriptions in aid of the building fund.
>
> Meanwhile Mr. W. K. Thomson notified the Melbourne Presbytery that if it were deemed advisable to appoint a deputation to visit Suva in the interests of the Church, he was prepared to defray all expenses in connection

with it. The Presbytery, with thankful acknowledgment of Mr. Thomson's large liberality, accepted his offer, and appointed the Rev. Duncan Fraser, M.A., deputy to Fiji.

Ross credits the first movement for the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Fiji to Sir William Macgregor, a medical practitioner, who he said was:

> ... fully alive to the moulding and elevating influences of religious ordinances, and, as a loyal son of the Church of Scotland, desiring to worship God after the manner of his fathers, made such urgent representations of the spiritual needs of the Presbyterian planters and traders in Fiji to the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland through the agency of a personal friend of his, that his action had resulted in the Committee resolving to give a grant of 200 pounds a year towards the stipend of a minister in Fiji.

Ross noted later that:

> ... the Presbyterian Church at Suva sustained a serious loss in the removal of (Dr.) Macgregor to fulfil an important appointment in British New Guinea. Born in 1846, a distinguished graduate of Aberdeen University, he was selected in 1873, by Sir Arthur Gordon, when Governor of Mauritius, to fill an important medical position at the Seychelles Islands. The following year he was removed to Mauritius. His strong intellect and lage capacity for work soon attracted the notice of the Governor, and, later on, Sir Arthur Gordon (now Lord Stanmore) testified of him: "He was not only the medical officer, but the life and soul of all the work that had to be done there, as Inspector of Schools, Inspector of Liberrated Africans employed in Planting, Magistrate, and in other offices which he filled. With perfect courage and tact he managed as no other man would have done to get work accomplished under difficulties of no ordinary kind."

In its early years, the church seems to have been regarded as a province of the white settlers and the minutes of the committee meeting of August 9, 1983, record that in discussions with the Church of Scotland it had been reported ' . . . as far as the natives were concerned, it was believed that they were amply provided for and that it would be unnecessary for the Presbyterian Minister to preach to them.'

Funding for the church came rapidly and on September 23, 1883 — eight months after the initial decision had been made — the new church, built and furnished by contractor McHarg at a cost of 1,306 pounds was opened for worship. The church was initially known as the Suva Presbyterian Church and the first service was conducted by Reverend J. Lambie, visiting Fiji from Melbourne.

With good sense of Scottish priorities, it was decided on September 24, 1883 that few rents should be set at one pound per year single or six pounds per year for families. In November it also was decided to seek a minister from Scotland and on November 15 at a meeting of the congregation, the first board of management was appointed for twelve months.

The church was under way and the robust infant was growing rapidly.

A Sunday school was opened in January, 1884 with a roll of seventeen children and a Sunday school library started which, by 1888 boasted seven hundred books.

The church's first Communion service was conducted by Reverend H.C. Giles (on leave from his church in Australia) early in 1884 with eighteen present and Messrs Stewart and Horne acting as Elders.

And later in 1884, the Church of Scotland appointed St Andrew's first established Minister, Reverend L.W. Rennison, and gave a contribution to the church of four hundred pounds a year for three years. At about the same time, a bazaar held in Alloa, Scotland, raised 860 pounds towards the church's building fund.

The new congregation was in evidence, although scattered through Suva, and the church committee asked the Suva Town Board for permission to use the school bell to call people to worship — a practice which continued until 1890 when a Mr Duncan presented the church with a new bell.

And the money coming in was being spent. A choir was quickly formed and its leader granted a salary of fifty pounds a year, and a Manse was erected on the same site as the present one at a cost of 663 pounds 75 shillings — in retrospect considered excellent value as it weathered Fiji's hurricanes and heat for the next eighty-one years.

But seeds of financial strife and internal dissention in the church were also growing. The minutes of January 25, 1886 record a letter written by Session to the minister informing him that there 'are insufficient funds to hand to pay you the portion of salary due from the committee'. The letter also hinted at some dissatisfaction with the minister (a malaise which recurs periodically through the church's history) because of falling congregational numbers and his apparent feeling that the church could not succeed. But the initial dissatisfaction apparently subsided as a subsequent meeting indicated a willingness to work with the ministers. But this sentiment was short-lived as disagreements broke out again later in the year and Reverend Rennison departed Fiji in 1887.

The Suva church apparently used local ministers from other denominations until the arrival of Reverend William Gardner from Melbourne in 1888.

While records for the period are scant, the church appears to have gone through a period of growth and prosperity under Reverend Gardner and the

minutes of May 7, 1889 report that 'in connection with the Sunday school a Polynesia Immigrants' class is being held, with thirty people, mainly Solomon Islanders attending for instruction in reading, writing, religion and general knowledge. Later reports indicate that the people in the classes were mainly from the Solomon Islands.

Then, in 1895, disaster struck when on January 5, a fierce hurricane struck Suva and completely destroyed the new church which had struck Suva and completely destroyed the new church which had only just been paid off.

The Rev Ross reports:

> The opening months of the year in those tropical latitudes are sometimes marked by wide devastations caused by tempests of cyclonic nature, which play havoc with shipping out of close shelter and sweep cocoanut groves and buildings out of their path. Early in January, 1895, one of these hurricanes, which the people have learned to dread, swept the islands with desolating fury, flung hapless crafts upon the reefs, and crushed the hopes of many planters. At Taviuni the houses along the coast were wrecked and valuable plantations were all laid waste. Suva did not escape disaster. St. Andrew's Church was struck with such violence that, when the morning dawned, it was found to be broken and battered, lying a heap of ruins on the ground.
>
> Gardner wrote under date, Suva, 7th January, 1895: % "I regret to have to report to the Presbytery that the Church here has been totally, demolished by a hurricane. For a time it seemed as if the manse would go too, but fortunately the storm abated in time to leave it standing.
>
> "Last Sunday promised to be one of the happiest since my settlement here seven years ago. Eleven new members, mostly young people, were admitted to Communion at the morning service. In the evening it was too stormy to hold service, but as the glass was not very low no one suspected ...
>
> "Of course there is nothing for it but to start at once with the building of a new Church. I know the state of things in Melbourne at present, but this hurricane has left Suva much worse off than Melbourne. I really don't know how we are to manage, for there is no use building another wooden Church. We must put up a building that will stand a hurricane. Can you help in any way?
>
> "Yours sincerely,
> "W.M. GARDNER.
>
> ...Within little more than a week of the calamitous event a meeting was held in the public schoolroom, at which Mr. Gardner presided, to discuss the situation. There was a large attendance and a generous spirit was evinced. Sir J.B. Thurston, the Governor, with a graceful expression of sympathy, sent a cheque for 10 pounds and the sum of 100 dollars was subscribed in the room in aid of the Building Fund of a new Church.
>
> The improvements made in the room in aid of the Building Fund of a new Church.
>
> The improvements made in the new place of worship were largely due to the efforts and unflagging interest of Mr. Gardner, who designed the Church, and took the oversight of its construction. It was opened early in April 1895, 56 pounds at a cost of 540 pounds; towards which subscriptions amounting to 289 pounds had been received, including the sum of 25 pounds subscribed in Victoria through the Presbytery of Melbourne South.

Ironically, the new church was built of wood and stands today as a well-seasoned part of the Suva landscape.

The church then appears to have entered a further period of consolidation and growth. The minutes report that in 1899, a congregational meeting in January farewelled the Reverend Jones with gifts and a purse of sovereigns. They also report that on March 13, 1899, Miss Rennie was appointed as the church's organist and that she resigned later in the year after being asked to improve her playing.

The church records then show a period of seemingly endless miscellany as ministers come and go, members of the congregation wax and wane and the daily life on the church expands.

The church boasted many notable names among its fold, some of them still significant names through succeeding generations living in Fiji today.

They included a significant number of sea captains. Williams and Gosling were both elders of the church; businessmen like A.E. (later Sir Alport) Barker the liquor merchant and one-time owner of *The Fiji Times* (whose current publisher, Garry Barker, is a relative); Walter Horne who operated the general store where Morris Hedstroms now stands; Mathew Whan who built Government House, the Colonial War Memorial Hospital and many other Suva buildings (he was a former Methodist who became a Presbyterian Elder); Gordon Honson of Honsons Limited, the general merchants; and many others.

As the years went by, they were joined by names such as the Raggs; the Borrons; the Terrys, who used to own the Nubukalou (Cummings St) area and who used to hold social evenings for the church in their ballroom); St Julian, the Chief Justice and Colonial postmaster; Robbie, the tea merchant; McGowan, of the firm of merchants, sailmakers and auctioneers; the Baileys, who operated the livery stables and taxis; the Kennedys from Nadi; Cuthberts, the soft drink manufacturers; Wooley, the sea captain; and Sir Robert Munro, the lawyer — names integral to Suva's history and Fiji's development.

From the turn of the century, the church appeared to enter a period of elegance, grace and style which probably reflected the lifestyle of the expatriate population in Fiji before the First World War.

It became a significant centre for social contact, through its congregation, and it led the movement for the establishment of the Fiji Arts Club and many other community organisations. A tennis club and other sporting and social adjuncts started and flourished, as did the church.

The church also reflected the increasing interest from New Zealand in Fiji and the minutes of July 9, 1900 note the suggestion that St Andrews sever its connections with Melbourne and join the New Zealand church as an extra-territorial parish. The suggestion came to fruition and a meeting on January 28, 1901, chaired by Reverend W. Thompson — the first minister from New

Zealand to be appointed to St Andrews — resolved that communion be observed twice yearly (the first Sunday in January and July) instead of quarterly.

Two services (morning and evening) were conducted each Sunday — a practice which was to continue until after the Second War War.

The records note that when Reverend Thompson welcomed the congregation, it appears to have been well organised with a strong team of collectors gathering in the 'Sustentation Fund', with local work complemented by help from Scotland. Despite this, the church was to find itself deeply in debt a mere eight years later.

And the minutae continued.

In 1903, a letter from the London Missionary Society advised that its Samoan members had acquired land next to St Andrews and would be building a church which would be lightedd by acetylene. And in 1906, on April 4, Sir Everard Imthurn advised that he had received a letter from a friend in Scotland asking for information on St Andrews' financial situation (presumably to generate further financial support from overseas), and at a meeting on October 26, one hundred members of the congregation signed a petition asking the then minister Reverend Baillie, to prolong his stay. (Apparently he did not, for at the meeting of April 30, 1907, the Reverend A.J. Small was thanked for conducting services during the vacancy.)

The year 1907 appears notable for the congregation's decision to repair and make comfortable the pew used by Lady Imthurn and as a prelude to 1908, which appears to have been a significant year for St Andrews.

St Andrews' twenty-fifth anniversary Year, (1908), was the year of the overdraft, the organ, and of the establishment of the church's Board of Management. The first management board meeting was held on January 31 and shortly after this, authorisation was given for the purchase of a single manual pipe organ, to be built by Messrs Geo Croft and Sons of Auckland at a cost of 470 pounds. The organ was completed in 1913 by Messrs Griffen and Leggo of Sydney when the second manual was installed at a cost of 312 pounds. (The organ today, through the ravages of time and climate is a shadow of the instrument when it was in its magnificent prime). The church was renovated and painted for the organ's installation and in June 1908, the Suva players raised sixty pounds towards church funds to cover the cost.

During the year, Robyn Archer resigned as choir boy and was replaced by Willie Halstead, later to become the church's organ blower for some years. (Halstead is still alive, resident in the Pearce Home, and well remembers his time as organ blower in the colourful gaity that was St Andrews in those days).

Also in 1908, the church thanked Morris Hedstroms in Levuka for the Yakka timber supplied for the Communion table.

Then, on December 14, 1908 came the news from the Bank of New Zealand that St Andrews' overdraft was 322 pounds and in excess of the amount guaranteed. It was promptly decided to reduce the overdraft to three hundred pounds and to keep it below that sum, which was guaranteed by Messrs Duncan and Smith.

Apparently their efforts were unsuccessful because by April 17, 1909, the overdraft was four hundred pounds. On September 12, 1909 the minister's wife, Mrs Legate, offered to wipe off the church debt by the end of the year and opened an account for collections. On December 31, she reported that she was successful, having collected 416 pounds. (The financial buoyancy must have been shortlived, for on June 17, 1910 a decision was taken to make another attempt to wipe off the church debt, with Messrs Aronald, Leash and and Killick appointed to assist in collecting money).

The year 1909 was also notable for the decision, on March 8, that varnish be washed off the church seats as it had been sticking to people's clothes and involuntarily prolonging their attendance at church.

St Andrews at the turn of the century

Gordon Street, Suva shortly after St Andrews was built and showing the church in the middle distance

DURING AND BETWEEN THE WARS

From 1914 to 1918, the activities of St Andrews congregation reflected the heroism, mundanity and dislocation that is war.

The church's Honour Roll for the Great War contains the names of seventy-two men who served in the Allied forces and of the twenty of these who gave their lives. In a moment of quiet reflection before the Honour board on the church wall one can see names of many families well known in Fiji, and others who are remembered by streets or places named after them.

Meanwhile, at home, the life of the church went on.

The relationship with the Samoan church was growing (St Andrews had given the church its harmonium prior to the war) and between 1915 and 1917, St Andrews maintained a class in the Methodist schoolroom in Suva for Solomon Islanders (at their first Communion service, twenty young Solomon Islanders were present).

The church held a variety of social functions, including the cantata Snow White (using the pipe organ). In 1915 it noted the establishment of a Rechabite Lodge in Suva and looked at a proposal to build a school hall. In 1916 it noted the resignation of Mr Allardyce, the death of Mr Good, had correspondence with the Fiji Times (on what matter is unclear), and thanked Miss Wilkinson for acting as organist. The year was also one of reflection on the state of the church finances, which were slipping, and notable for the decision to call Reverend Jackson to take over the charge at the start of his three-year term.

In 1916, the Women's Missionary Union presented the Church with a Communion table and chairs which served St Andrews until 1933 when the present table and chairs were given by a number of seafaring men.

The mundane life at home continued through 1917 and 1918, with resolutions that the lamp over the front gate should be lighted on Sunday evenings, that Mr Stokes had donated a tin of kerosene for the purpose, and of commiserations to the Reverend and Mrs Chambers, of Bau, whose son had fallen at the Front.

But a different type of disaster struck in 1918 when a severe influenza epidemic swept Fiji causing many death and the suspension of services at St Andrews for a period after the Session was 'reduced to one member by death and other reasons.'

But the church revived and, in 1920, was formally placed under the Presbytery of South Melbourne. Prior to this the church had been independent of outside control and while working in close harmony with The Methodist Church of Fiji sought what help sister churches overseas could provide.

The early 1920s were a period of seemingly incongruous mixture of growth, introspection (another recurrent theme of St Andrews) and selective community involvement.

One learns that on December 13, 1920 there were (hopefuly not conjoint) lectures on Robbie Burns and on the hours of trading in hotel bars; that in January, 1921 there was an appeal for sufferers of the famine then sweeping Europe; that in the same year electric light was installed in the church and Manse; and that the system (which continues today) of giving regularly in envelopes was introduced.

That in June, 1923 the Girls Guide's plea to be allowed to decide the use of monies raised by them was refused by the board of management, that the church began to organise assistance to the relatively large and economically depressed sections of the Chinese community then in Suva; and that the church's guild hall was built at a cost of seven hundred pounds.

And that by 1925, the close co-operation with the Methodist church in Fiji had led to tentative suggestions for the formation of one, united English-speaking church for the European population in the colony; and many other such snippets from the records of the life of the church.

Possible union with the Methodist Church

There had been considerable discussion among the congregation of St Andrews during the early 1920s on the possible formation of a single English-speaking church in Suva. This feeling culminated with the decision by the Session on October 12, 1926 to write to the Methodist Synod, then about to meet in Suva:

> The Session of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church sends greetings to you as you meet together at this time in Suva for your Annual Synod ... The Session is desirous of seeking a closer relationship between the two Churches in connection with Christian work among Europeans in Fiji and takes the liberty of suggesting that Synod appoint representatives ... to meet Session in conference in order to discuss the question of cooperation.'

The joint meetings which followed suggested a scheme under which the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches would become one for the purposes of work among the expatriate community and be known as the United Church of Fiji. The proposed church would be operated from Australia by a joint council and there would be two ministers — one for the Suva congregation and one itineating for the whole of the Fiji group of islands.

The scheme was followed through 'experimentally' for a number of years, starting formally in 1930, but attracted harsh criticism and an eventual lengthy submission in 1934 from people who wanted to maintain the two independent churches. In July the previous year, there had been a motion discussed to dissolve the union between the 478 Presbyterian and 250 Methodist members. By the time of the meeting of delegates from the two churches in the Presbyterian Guild Hall on February 15, 1934, Methodist members had boycotted church meetings at St Andrews.

At the May 16, meeting on union, the moderator (resident minister) of the Presbyterian Church said '... is this church to be run by the Methodists or the Presbyterians?'

The matter remained unresolved when Reverend D. McCosh had to leave Fiji through ill health in November, 1934 but by the end of the year it was decided that the union scheme had 'failed to produce union and has caused instead discord and lack of harmony'.

Some of the more bellicose Presbyterians at the time claimed that in reverting to the former pattern of worship, St Andrews had 'never been better'.

Yet despite the independent stance of the time, St Andrews then as now, maintained close links and complementary working relations with churches in Fiji, the region, and with its sister churches in New Zealand, Australia and Scotland. this Eucumenical movement was to grow and expand through the years to be embodied in St Andrews current stance as an eucumenical crossroads for the South Pacific.

The church in the 1930s

If the church records are an accurate record of its life, St Andrews during the 1930s seemed to enter a period of smug complacency and introspection breeding trivia — an attitude which has typified its stance at various times in its history.

By the early 1930s, the church had begun to take the shape that it has today. Its shingled roof had been replaced with the current iron and the installation of an electric blower for the pipe organ in 1929 (used today with modification) meant the demise of the position of organ blower. Sir Alport Barker had arranged for a weekly paragraph on St Andrews activities in *The Fiji Times,* and a garage for Reverend Turner's car had been built under the guild hall in Goodenough Street.

In March 1930 the church cleaned up and repaired damage caused by yet another hurricane and on March 31, 1930 the congregation paid respects with a minute's silence to commemorate the death of Nelson Grayburn who had been St Andrew's Session Clerk continuously for thirty years. One of the guiding hands of the church had left it. Another, Mr Terry, died later in the same year.

In December 1930 further repairs to the church were carried out by Mr Acraman (a family name well known in Fiji) under the supervision of Mr M.M. Whan and in June 1931, Sir Alport Barker, then treasurer, returned from leave in Melbourne with a letter from the Presbyterian moderator containing details of the successor to the then minister, Reverend Turner.

Relations between Reverend Turner and the congregation seem to have been unusually warm, given St Andrew's sometimes turbulent relations with its clergy for, at a meeting in February 1932, Sir Alport (then Mr A.E.) Barker moved that 'an expression of pleasure of the Board of Management be placed on record regarding the happy relations that have always existed between the Rev. C.W. Turner and the Board.' The minutes note that 'Rev. Turner replied on behalf of Mrs. Turner and himself and invited members to the Manse for a cup of tea which Mrs. Turner would have ready for them. Members adjourned to the Manse and spent a pleasant hour chatting after having enjoyed a cup of tea and good things supplied by Mrs. Turner'.

The board of management at that time was Messrs A.E. Barker, A.W. Small, D. Ross and J.J. McHugh.

The year 1932 saw the installation of cooling fans in the church and, on the motion of Captain E.W.G. Twentyman, that pews be reserved and rent paid as a source of revenue. After this an amendment was carried that 'pews be allocated and that a voluntary addition be made in the amount placed in envelopes by members who have seats allocated; these seats to be reserved until 11 o'clock for the morning service and until 7 o'clock for the evening service'.

In November 1932, Captain Twentyman reported that the opening of the celestory windows in the church had caused a drop of two degrees in temperature and that he would make a report later.

The Great Depression sweeping Europe and the United States at the time appeared to have little effect on life at St Andrews and on the approach to its fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 1933, the thriving church was congratulated on its 'sound financial position'.

In June 1933, the church received a bequest of one thousand pounds from the estate of the late Mr James Harper.

The church boasted a ladies club and young peoples club, a tennis club and other youth and community clubs — and discussions were being held on the advisability of a croquet lawn.

The church's jubilee was celebrated in fine style in September 1933 with a special Sunday service (at which H.E. Sir Murchison Fletcher read the lesson) and a 'largely attended' banquet.

Among anniversary gifts presented to the church were a Communion table from Captain Pederson of the yacht *Zaca,* elders chairs (one each from Captains Twentyman, Williams, Hoddinot, Hope, Evans, Gosling) a minister's chair by Captain Williams, a baptismal font by Mr T. Nicholson, a clock from the masonic members of the church, matting for the Communion platform by Mr T. Horne and a pulpit chair, bookboard, pulpit light and lectern by James Borron. (A hose and deck brooms were provided by Captain Twentyman). The Communion tankard and cup believed to have been presented some years earlier by Mr Murchie were refurbished, suitably engraved and placed in the church above the Roll of Honour.

By the time of the 1934 annual report, Communion was being observed quarterly; religious instruction was being given by the minister in two grammar schools; the Wooley and Borron memorial stained glass windows were being installed; and Trevor Johnston, W.G. Bradshaw and W. Fowler were playing the organ in the absence on leave of Miss G. Wilkinson, St Andrew's organist for many years.

At this time, a rift seems to have developed with Sir Allport Barker, an Elder of the church since 1918, whose resignation was accepted in May, 1934.

By 1935, St Andrews had entered a period of neat and orderly minutes, kept by the secretary of the board of management, Mr (now Sir Robert) Munro, of Suva. The annual report for 1935 was printed for circulation to the congregation and the minutes record that on January 7, 1936 the board then consisted of Messrs Munro, Nicholsen, Barrack, Tate, Surridge and Dr Jack.

On February 11, 1936, Mr Surridge reported that Reverend George Budd would arrive with Reverend and Mrs Hardie to perform the induction service on March 9, 1936, with Reverend Budd being accommodated at the Grand Pacific Hotel.

In May 1936, Messrs Anderson and Cole were welcomed to the board and on June 17 the layout of the area in the front of the church was discussed and ... it was resolved not to create a new entrance but to reduce by one half the area outside the circular hedge. The work proposed would enable all cars to come to the front of the church. Dr Jack and Mr Surridge were to supply a scheme for improving the layout (they did and the layout — with some modifications — is the same today).

In August, the board expressed its gratitude to Mrs G.W. Thomson for her gift of plants for the front of the church and thanked Mr W.E Hancock for 'providing at his expense' adequate lighting for the front grounds of the church.

At the board meeting on November 2, 1936, a Christmas club fund sub-committee comprising Messrs Wilkinson, Wooley, Hardie, Stubbs and Munro was appointed; and the secretary was instructed to convey to Miss V.H. McHugh the good wishes of the board on the occasion of her approaching marriage to Mr W.A. Cole.

At the annual general meeting in 1936, Reverend Hardie, secretary Mr Munro and Dr Jack referred to the 'excellent work' of the St Andrews Club and the auditor, W. Bannatyne, expressed appreciation for the work of Mr Munro as secretary over the past two years.

In 1937, the first lady members were elected to the management board (they have remained a significant force on the board ever since) and there were talks with Mr Exon of Fiji Broadcasting Company over the possibility of broadcast services (they happened because Mr Bradman, who was transferred to Lautoka, listened to them and reported on their good quality) and a letter of welcome was sent to the new Governor of the Colony.

In the same year, St Andrews transferred its connection from the Australian church, becoming an extra-territorial parish of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church under the jurisdiction of the Auckland Presbytery — as it is today. But the links then, as now, were regarded as tenuous because of distance, poor communication and the strong feeling of independence in the congregation.

On February 2, 1937, the board sent its 'felicitations' to Messrs Barrack and Munro on the 'announcement of their respective engagements' and sent a letter of condolence to Mr W.M. Gatward on the 'loss of his wife'.

On March 31, 1937, the church lost the services of one of its stalwarts when it accepted the resignation from the secretaryship of the board of management of Mr Munro with 'deep regret and appreciation of his services' and decided thaat Mr L. Bradman would act as secretary. Messrs Bradman, Elliott and Leembruggen had joined the board at that meeting.

At the meeting the moderator reported that he had accepted an invitation from the Bishop of Polynesia to take part in a united Coronation service which was to be recorded and broadcast to the St Andrews congregation through Fiji. The effort gained a letter of thanks from the Governor of the colony in June when he thanked St Andrews for the services rendered during the Coronation of King George V.

Also in June, the congregation presented a tea waggon to Mr and Mrs Munro; Miss Wilkinson (the organist for many years) asked for the use of the

Sunday school piano 'for which she was willing to pay' and it was decided that 'she be granted the privilege free' in 'appreciation of her services to the kirk'; a Hibiscus show on board the tourist ship *Orford* raised sixty-three pounds; and four hundred feet of floor boards in the church were replaced by Whan Constructions, and the church walls and roofs washed and painted.

And the mundane life of the church continued during the year ... In October, the canvas of the organ bellows was renewed and in December, Dr Jack and family, leaving by mail boat on furlough, were issued a certificate authorising Dr Jack to represent the Suva Presbyterian Church at any church abroad and to convey greetings. The meeting also received letters of transfer to New Zealand from Reverend Budd.

February 1938 saw a pause during the leviathon effort of Miss Wilkinson as church organist when she resigned (an act she was asked to reconsider — and did when transport was provided to and from the church); a note of thanks in respect of Suva Relief fund for parcels sent to the inmates of the Cottage Home (now the Pearce Home — a nursing home); an article on St Andrews prepared for the journal *Outlook* of New Zealand...

...and a letter advising of the disbandment of the St Andrews Tennis Club and disposal of its property, including the presentation of a new lawnmower, to the board of management.

May 1938 saw an arrangement with Mr Exon of Fiji Broadcasting Company (his son, Dr Neville Exon and his family were regular worshippers at St Andrews until they left Fiji in 1982) about broadcast services; the donation of a visitors book by Reverend Hardie; and a Hibiscus Show on board the *S S Oronsay* which netted seventy pounds.

During the year, discussions were also held on the possibility of selling the Manse for removal to allow for a new Manse of smaller dimensions to be built; a discussion which continued through 1939 and led to a compromise of the existing Manse being remodelled in 1940 at a cost of three hundred pounds. (It was not until 1967 that the current Manse was erected on the Goodenough Street site.)

It was noted that the attendance at the morning service on August 2, 1938 totalled forty-eight people — a far cry from the larger numbers of a vastly changed congregation a few years later and the numbers of people who fill the church today.

June 1939, saw congregation numbers depleted by an influenza epidemic which swept the colony and a report from Dr Jack on the widening of Gordon Street which meant surrendering a strip of land on the church frontage, for which the Suva Town Board had agreed to pay four pounds for compensation

... And on September 19, 1939, the outbreak of World War II was mentioned under business at the board of management meeting.

St Andrews during World War II

St Andrews during the Second World War was yet again a curious mixture of bold heroism and mundane trivia and on a number of planes — the dislocation caused by the absence of many members of the congregation, the influx of servicemen, and the later impact of the war in the Pacific which raged around but did not touch Fiji — this war had a greater effect on the church than any other period in its history. It was a number of years before St Andrews would revert to its quietly slumbering existence behind the trees and hedges in Gordon Street.

Records indicate that the congregation had a difficult period during the early war years but with the spread of war to the Pacific region and the establishment of Fiji was a major base, St Andrews welcomed many servicemen, mainly from New Zealand and the United States.

Meanwhile, despite the war, the life of the church went on . . .

The 1939 Young People's Club and Sunday school reports showed a pleasing increase in attendances; the guild hall was being rented for a wireless club which flourished for a number of years; and Mr Millan was asked to examine the switchboard because of the 'undue smell of burning rubber' when the church lights were turned on.

By 1940, the concrete path of the guild hall and steps to Goodenough Street had been completed and the Reverend Hardie thanked Dr Jack for his 'timely and serviceable improvements'.

Church services at Tailevu were being held once a month; church notices were being broadcast free of charge; the wireless club was running smoothly; and Mrs Derrick (Mr Brian Derrick's mother) and Mrs Hardie (the minister's wife) were assisting in scripture instruction in the grammar schools in Suva.

Mrs Barrack was congratulated on her seventy-first birthday, the St Andrews Ladies Club and Young People's Club opened for the 1940 season, and radio broadcasts of the church services were resumed after being cancelled on the outbreak of the war.

Mr R.A. Derrick (after whom the Fiji Institute of Technology was named) joined the board of management; it was decided that due to the world crisis, the Manse should be remodelled at a cost of three hundred pounds instead of a new Manse being built; and a week-night devotional meeting of prayer was introduced due to the anxiety caused by the course of the war.

Mr J.J. Stubbs (the then manager of Cable and Wireless) as treasurer, and Dr Jack (then director of Agriculture) recorded that donations from the

Church of Scotland were being received from time to time; the Boy Scouts requested use of the guild hall, the minister helped them and Mr Derrick became Scout Commissioner and Mr Scrampton Scout Master.

By the middle of 1940, St Andrews was befriending members of the New Zealand forces who were also attending the Young People's Club and social hours after Sunday evening service as well as the church's Friday evening socials for the troops.

By November 1940, the Fiji Red Cross and War Appeals were regularly using St Andrews for their meetings (free of charge) and the Manse had been remodelled into a 'very comfortable dwelling'.

December saw a farewell party for Mr Stubbs and thanks to Padre Mitchell and Sergeant Major Judson of the New Zealand army for their services to the church.

In February 1941, the congregation accepted the apologies of their long-standing organist Miss Wilkinson who was on duty at the Soldiers Canteen; Mr Stubbs was presented with a 'suitably engraved' writing pad, blotter and inkwells; Mr Harvey reported a breakdown in the broadcast service to Station 2JV (the batteries had gone flat); the introduction of a Collection Offertory prayer; monthly services at Tailevu; an approach by well known music teacher Mrs Barnfather for the use of the guild hall piano for teaching; and hearty congratulations to Dr Jack and Mrs Derrick (who was running the Fiji Women's Club) for their awards in the New Years Honours lists.

The second half of 1941 saw ventilators added to the church, Mr Hungerford of the Bank of New South Wales auditing the books; a special (July 6) morning service for the men of the *Prince Robert;* and Private Hetherington and Miss Derrick playing the organ in the absence of Miss Wilkinson.

By then a significant number of servicemen were attending St Andrews and chaplains and soldiers regularly helped to administer the elements in Communion.

On September 7, 1941, St Andrews participated in a National Day of Prayer with morning and evening services. Also in September, Miss Wilkinson again resigned as organist (and was again persuaded not to); two extra lights were added to the church; and St Andrews received a letter of thanks from Invercargill for the hospitality it was extending to New Zealand soldiers.

By the first half of 1942, Reverend Hardie was on leave through ill health, and Dr Stevenson had taken over the Charge for the remainder of the year; the police ordered the congregation to take air raid precautions during service; and Mrs Barnfather's music lessons in the guild hall had been terminated because of annoyance caused to the occupants of the Manse.

And as the war moved closer, the lifestyle at St Andrews changed more and more . . .

On September 6, 1942, it was agreed that the next Communion service would be held on a moonlight night because 'some are prevented from attending by the "blackout" when there is no moon'.

By 1943, visiting servicemen had virtually 'taken over' the church and the year's annual report said that 'Sunday services have been extra well (sic) patronised, especially by servicemen, week after week. The seating capacity of the church has been frequently strained to its limits. On two occasions seats were placed outside and once a second service was held immediately following the normal service. It is most encouraging to see new faces in the news all the time'.

From March, 1943 the military had been using the kirk for a soldiers 'parade service at 8.30a.m. on Sundays and in April the moderator reported that some of these had been poorly attended. The church was also used for a 6.30p.m. Good Friday Soldiers' Communion Service.

And so the war went on . . .

A special, December 5, 1943 Communion service for 117 members of the United States army who expected to leave Fiji shortly after was 'greatly appreciated by the soldiers who requested it . . .'

And in January 1944, Reverend L.C.M. Donaldson reported that he was handicapped in visiting servicemen and members of the congregation because his bicycle had been smashed in collision with a military vehicle.

THE POST WAR YEARS

The records for St Andrews in the Post-World War II years to the 1980s bear surprisingly little fruit, leading to the conclusion that the church like its patron saint, stood back from the fray and toiled quietly to continue the pattern it had established for itself over the previous sixty to eighty years. The early post war records chronicle the inevitable wind-down after the war and later records indicate that St Andrews reverted to the aloof mein which in part still characterises the church today.

The two big issues of 1947 seem to be discussion by the churches on the proposed Liquor Bill of the time (St Andrews arranged to have Sir Henry Scott to present a petition to the Governor); and the September 12 decision that 'the Young People's clubs be informed that the Board of Management after full discussion could not agree to their combining dancing with their weekly meetings, the floor not being strong enough'.

St Andrews' links with the military continued through 1948 with the January 9 decision to allow the Rehabilitation Officer to use the church hall for navigation instruction classes for the five week days for the next three months at a total cost of ten pounds, and the weekly discussion group and Sunday service which continued through the year at the Laucala Bay Air Force station.

By April, a 9.30a.m. Sunday bible class had been established; small but profitable services were being conducted regularly in Tailevu; and services at the Vatukoula gold mines had been suspended for a period over a dispute with the company on the use of its school (an isssue resolved with the resumption of services later in the year); two-monthly services were being held at Ba and Penang; and services at Nadi were continuing despite the declining support.

St Andrews' close association with the Fiji Arts Club continued through the year (its music section used the church hall); as did its association with the Fiji Society which also used the guild hall.

From August 1948, monthly services were held at the Suva Point Guide Hall; on March 11, 1949 the Reverend D. MacDairmid was inducted; and the 1949 repairs committee reported 'Sunday night services have kept many people in suspence, not least the organist who stands to be electrocuted unless repairs are affected soon.'

The fascinating use of church facilities continued through the early 1950s with the hall being used by the Boy Scouts, the Orchid Club, for St Johns Ambulance Brigade, school concerts, European Young Mens' Club, the Fiji Society of Science and Industry, the Methodist Mission Wesley School, Mrs Burness for music lessons, and even the Fiji Education Department for examinations.

As well, the Fiji Womens' Club were holding monthly meetings, and the hall was being regularly used by the Presbyterian Table Tennis Club, the Methodist Young Adults' Club and the St Andrews Club.

St Andrews was continuing its close links with the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and on July 23, 1952 sent a letter expressing its 'heartfelt gratitude to the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand for your continued support, interest, prayer and financial assistance rendered over many years ... and for the additional help so generously given this year following the hurricane in Suva'.

By October 1953 the Ba and Vatukoula services had been combined and in Tailevu services had been discontinued until prospects improved; St Andrews had made a donation to the inter-denominational church at Nadi Airport; and its ministers were conducting services at Lautoka as well as infrequent services at the Queen Victoria and Ratu Kadavalevu Schools.

The guild hall had been extended to include a back Sunday School room and a kindergarten at a cost of 2,400 pounds.

On September 22, Miss Wilkinson (Mr Don Burness' aunt) celeberated fifty years as the St Andrews church organist, and in 1957 the church adopted the principles of Christian Stewardship which, for a time, enabled the church to be independent.

By 1960 community involvement had increased with bi-monthly Nadi and Lautoka services, the establishment of church and home groups and mens' fraternals, an ante-natal clinic, and a crippled childrens' society as well as a comprehensive range of community clubs and organisations. (The December 13 meeting of the board of management decided that all Christmas appeal monies would go to the Crippled Children's Society.)

On September 30, 1966 St Andrews recommended that the newly formed Fiji Council of Churches, press for non-denominational religious instruction at Suva Grammar School on a class basis, with children whose parents objected being excused, and that the instruction follow the New Zealand syllabus.

Financial problems seemed to beset tne church again during the 1960s and in 1963, the year of St Andrews eightieth birthday the board advised Session that 'income is inadequate to meet expenditure'.

Despite a brief period of financial buoyancy in 1964 and 1965, the church's financial situation has deteriorated ever since. This was despite the report from

New Zealand in 1966, that St Andrews had the second highest income per member of the churches in the Auckland Presbytery, to which it was attached.

But after the new Manse was built in 1967 the annual bazaar was revived to reduce the mortgage on the Manse.

During this period St Andrews had an active Sunday school which catered for kindergarten and primary school children up to the age of twelve years. There was also a creche. Bible classes were run by enthusiastic men and women, many of whom were from the R.N.Z.A.F, school teachers and others from New Zealand, Australia or the U.K. working in and around Suva. The late Mr Trevor Agar was Sunday school superintendent for many years and was also a dynamic choir leader. But after Independence numbers declined, although in recent years there has been an increase in Sunday school attendance.

The Church and Home Group became known as The Young Women's Fellowship. This group and the Women's Guild met regularly and held social functions to raise money to provide items for the church and the Dilkusha Orphanage, often making a special effort in response to a community need.

The arrival of Peace Corps workers and other voluntary agency personnel, together with others working in Fiji under contract, brought a new awakening and a new stimulus to community needs. Mrs Muriel Miles was responsible for setting up a homework program at Raiwaqa to enable children from less fortunate homes to study in a quiet, well lit room. Many of the parishioners assisted in this project.

A day-care centre was established in the church hall, primarily for single mothers who needed to work to provide for their children. Likewise, a full-time kindergarten with trained teachers began in the downstairs Sunday school room.

St Andrew's link with the P.T.C brought many dynamic people to assist with pulpit supply and during vacancies. Dr George Knight, as a Session member and leader of discussion groups gave a series of studies on the Old Testament. Dr Knight improved broadcasting techniques and developed services. It is interesting to note that St Andrews at this time had a broadcast service on the second Sunday of each month.

And Mrs Tedi Mebust's talent for creative all-embracing family services is well remembered. The colourful banners seen in St Andrew are part of the Mebust Lutheran Church awareness of the church calendar. Her last musical celebration service remains most memorable.

St Andrews has been fortunate in having a wealth of musical talent. Many names of singers and organists spring to mind especially Mrs Ethel Naidu, who ably led the choir for several years. Some of the special choral services often included members of other faith.

St Andrews' first woman elder, Mrs Mavis Israel (wife of the former chairman of Air Pacific, Mr Mark Israel) was inducted as St Andrews first

woman elder in 1968, making the year a milestone for the church in its recognition of the services of its female members of the congregation.

And change was apparent in a number of other areas in the late 1960s as clouds of uncertainty and apprehension enveloped the predominantly white congregation over the future of their church. The possibility of a move to a more central location in Suva to serve this congregation, was looked at in 1969 and abandoned.

The feeling was abroad that with the Colony's moves towards independence and th inevitable decline in the numbers of the expatriate population, St Andrews may not survive. Its congregation had been virtually static at about one hundred during the 1960s, its financial situation was poor and its former encompassing role in the various organisations of the Suva community had atrophied with time.

Despite this, the church moved into the early 1970s with a degree of confidence and reported that its nineteenth anniversary celebrations in 1973, with their special services and historical diplays, were a 'great success'. Throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s the faithful and tireless devotion of Don Burness and Vili Tikomaimaleya in preparing the church for Communion and other services was an inspiration to those who attended the Church in those years.

Fiji Council of Churches: Pacific Theological College

On November 29, 1963, the St Andrews moderator (the Reverend J. Gardiner) attended a meeting convened by Bishop Vockler with the Methodist Church and London Missionary Society, to form a Christian Council in Fiji. On October 26, 1964, St Andrews session approved the constitution proposed by Bishop Vockler as a basis for the Fiji Council of Churches, and on February 5, 1965 Reverend Gardiner and Mr Hurley represented St Andrews as founder members of the Council at its first meeting.

In April 1966, the St Andrews moderator toured Viti Levu with the president of the Methodist Church, the London Missionary Society pastor, and the Bishop of Polynesia to conduct services on church unity. The tours led in part to the moves for the recognition of the newly established Pacific Theological College with which St Andrews has been closely associated with ever since.

The period seems to have been one of theological revival for St Andrews through its support for the Council and the College.

The revival led to a period of combined Bible studies with the Anglican Church in 1966 and 1967, and the use of St Andrews pulpit by Reverend Lopeli Taufa of P.T.C. during the moderator's tour around Viti Levu as well as a combined eight-week series of lectures on Christian faith for laymen.

With the establishment of the Pacific Theological College in Suva in 1965, St Andrews entered a new phase. The first two principals were Presbyterian ministers, and the first (The Reverend Dr. G.A.F. Knight) in particular, was an enthusiastic supporter of St Andrews. Students from the college and from the University of the South Pacific, still in its infancy, were encouraged to participate in the life of the parish.

This began a trend that has strengthened St Andrew's eucumenical, multi-cultural nature.

Throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s the faithful and tireless devotion of Don Burness and Vili Tikomaimaleya in preparing the church and Communion and other services was an inspiration to those who attended the Church in those years.

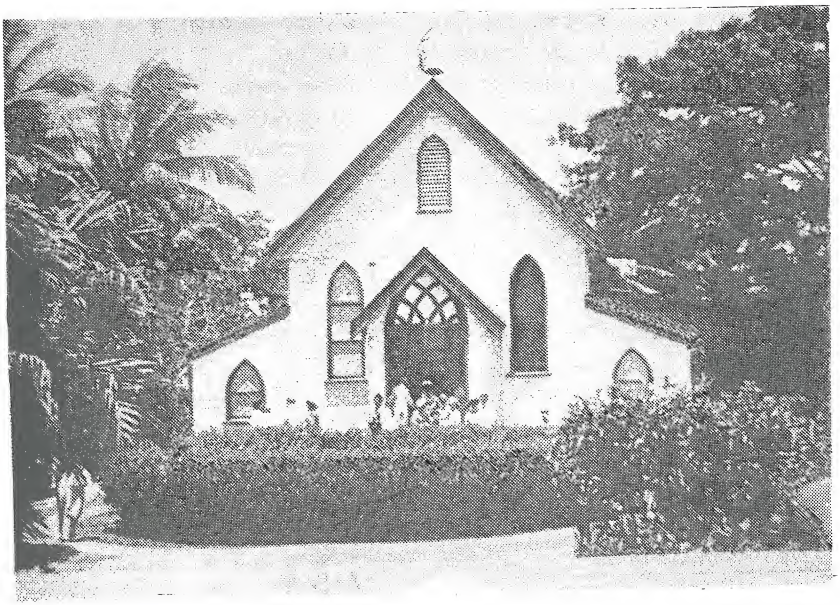
The opening of the P.T.C. also lead to the expansion of close links between St Andrews and students from Pacific Islands which had started some years before through the Fiji Medical School. Increasing numbers of P.T.C. students attended St Andrews and in 1968, Reverend F. Kalo, a New Hebridean student, was inducted as St Andrew's first non-European Elder. It has been the custom ever since to have P.T.C. student on Session.

The opening of the University of the South Pacific's Laucala campus has expanded these links and over the years an increasing number of students from as far away as New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Western Samoa and French Polynesia have regarded St Andrews as their spiritual home in Suva.

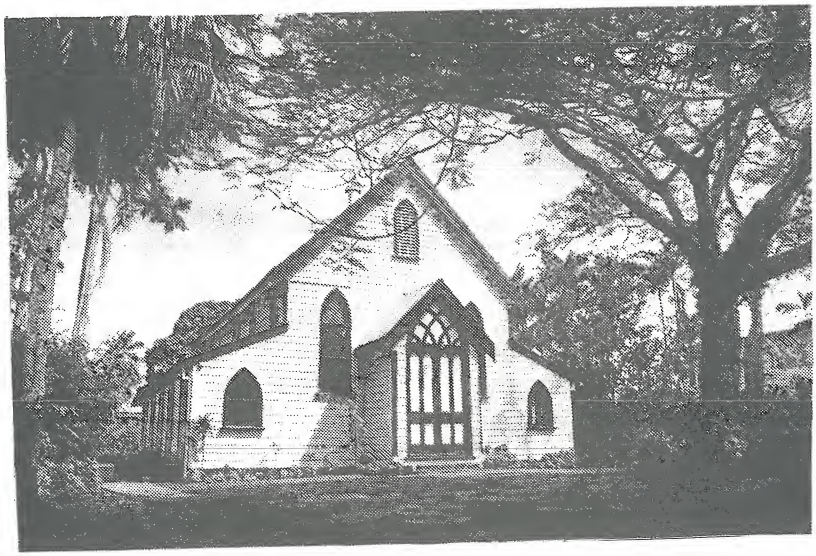
Kiribati students hold services at St Andrews in their own language; the pulpit is often the forum for students and teachers from other denominations and places. From this point on, staff members (and students, to a large extent) filled the pulpit during vacancies, bringing a greater international flavour to the style and content of worship.

This trend may also account for the fall off in many of Methodist ministers for pulpit supply, who until this time, had served St. Andrews well.

The close association with the College has continued to the benefit of church and college. The present minister, (as did two of his predecessors), serves as secretary to the College council.



St Andrews in the 1950s



The church today

ST ANDREWS TODAY

Today, St Andrews stands as a major English-speaking church in the region, with a burgeoning congregation of more than 250 — 150 of these being regular worshippers. Its eucumenical spirit is recognised across the Pacific, particularly through its bonds with the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Theological College.

There had always been an 'eucumenical' feel about St Andrews (in name, government and form of worship) and today it is the spiritual home for people from a variety of denominational traditions.

St Andrews is committed to the wider church and its work, is a member of the Fiji Council of Churches, the Housing Assistance and Relief Fund, and is beginning to reach out in response to the needs of Fiji and the region.

The eucumenical spirit now is a reflection of the way in which St Andrews began one hundred years ago 'working in full harmony with the Methodist Mission in Fiji' and which has been advanced by its ministers and congregation.

The flexible vitality of the church has enabled it to adapt and respond to the changing demands of Fiji and the Pacific and to change its values from white to Pacific.

In 1982-83, the present minister served as president of the Fiji Council of Churches. In that capacity, he hosted an interfaith service at the National Stadium where Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited Fiji (October 30, 1982), and a visit by Dr Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. He has also been active in hurricane relief work since Cyclone Oscar (March 1983). Another member of Session, David Bell, has been serving as treasurer to the Fiji Council of Churches.

While, because of the nature of its congregation, its finances are poor, there is a pervasive feeling in the congregation that in the words of the minister, 'the last thing a bankrupt church needs to worry about is money...'

Its current congregation is a fascinating mixture of rich and poor, old and new and the developing composition of the church has not been without some friction and dissention.

In 1982-3, the present Minister served as President of the Fiji Council of Churches. In that capacity, he hosted an Interfaith Service at the National

Stadium where Her Majesty Q.E. II visited Fiji (October 30 1982), and a visit by Dr Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. He has also been active in Hurricane Relief work since Cyclone Oscar (March 1982). Another member of session, David Bell, has been serving in FCC Treasurer.

Some of the members of the old settler families in Fiji — there are about fifty of them represented at St Andrews — see a different view through their theological window on Christianity to the 'transients' — the students, expatriate business and diplomatic appointees in Fiji for varying periods, and the clergy and theological students who are learning about the practice of Christianity in Fiji.

Since Fiji's independence in 1970 and the dramatic fall-off in expatriate numbers as the reins of Government have been taken over by local people, there has been change — change in Fiji and consequent change in St Andrews.

The church's Nadi and Lautoka services still continue spasmodically, but the centre of attention is now on the building at the corner of Gordon and Goodenough Streets, and the church's future.

There are some who feel the church will not survive but, like the first minister in the 1880s, they are in the minority.

So there has been debate, and change, and lengthy periods of somewhat soulful introspection over the past few years.

But the period has been productive and has led to the evolvement the current views of Session that the church spend its hundredth year in contemplation of its way forward in the future.

The Session is optimistic and most members of the congregation bullishly confident about not only survival but an expanding future for a thriving church.

On June 5 this year, the church's Elders went into retreat at the home of Peter Wyatt to examine the vexing questions of inadequate finances and an uncertain future.

Those present were Reverend Alex Sutherland, Francis Ashby (Session Clerk), Gwen Deverell (wife of the lecturer at Pacific Theological College, Bruce Deverell), Peter Wyatt, Mavis Israel, Don Burness, David Bell, Ethel Naidu, Pastor Thomas and Brian Derrick. The results of their deliberations were encompassed in a statement read to the congregation by Frances Ashby the next Sunday.

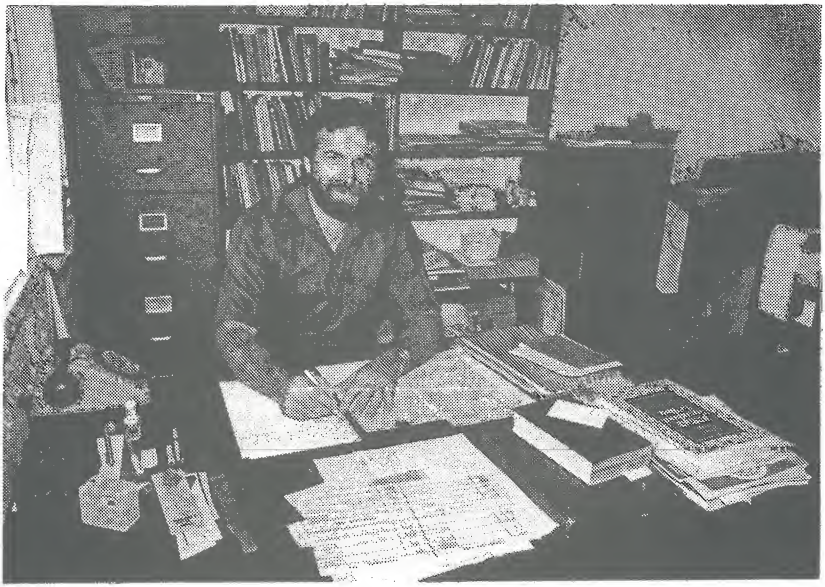
> A couple of Sundays ago, you were given a number of very unpalatable facts about St Andrew's finances — and the question was asked — 'What is the future of St Andrew's — if any?'. This question was the subject of several hours discussion at an Elders' retreat held last Sunday afternoon.

We decided that our church *does* have a future; that its future lies in developing further our regional role — a role we already play by virtue of our association with P.T.C. and the fact that members of our congregation come from many Pacific Island countries — that we do this by becoming more closely allied with a regional institution — for example, the U.S.P. via its Chaplaincy. This posst is vacant and we have written to the Fiji Council of Churches expressing our interest and asking for further details.

Another area of concern is congregational enrichment — discovering the needs of people in our congregation, getting to know one another better and trying to meet those needs.

We felt that from there we could reach out to help meet needs in the community outside our Church; embark on social service projects. One project of considerable interest, which was discussed at length is a human relations centre, with facilities to give expert help on problems that undermine mental health. Ambitious? Sure it is — but worth doing a feasibility study on.

This is St Andrew's centennial year!!! The Elders are keen to grasp a vision for the future and work positively towards it. We feel it is time to be creative in the way we serve the region and the total life of the church in Suva.



Reverend Alex Sutherland

The interior of St Andrews today — showing the church's pipe organ and Communion table

AT THE CROSSROADS — WHICH WAY FORWARD?

— by Reverend Alex Sutherland
Moderator of St Andrews

We review one hundred years of a parish's life with a mixture of emotions. Certainly, there is a feeling of accomplishment. We have survived. There aare some notable achievements. There are signs of the challenges having been tackled with some imagination. But there are also regrets, as, with hindsight, we identify the lost opportunities and lack of direction.

The researchers for this book found little to highlight. Parish life, it appears, has been rather routine — even mundane. It is almost impossible to discern from minute books what went on between people, and what part St Andrews really played in the life of those who settled in Suva unless they were preoccupied with nothing else but finding funds, the maintenance of buildings and the calling of ministers, who seemed to disappear with puzzling regularity after a brief stint in the tropics.

St Andrews has assumed, throughout its history, a low profile. It has gone about its business quietly and without a great deal of fuss. In that respect its name suits. Andrew was the unassuming disciple who introduced others to Jesus, then stood back so he wouldn't get in the way. One would hope however, that this argument is never used as an excuse for silence, and a reluctance to speak about our faith in ways that challenge others with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This little wooden church has been the 'spiritual home' of many. Citizens, residents, workers, students and visitors have all found a place here. That continues to be the case, underlying the fact that St Andrews is not the preserve of a few, but a base for many who come to Suva to study, work and live. The diverse nature of the congregation is in itself, a challenge to those called to minister here.

St Andrews was once described for me, by someone who is a regular visitor, as a church 'at the cross roads'. He had in mind the physical positioning of Saint Andrews as a church in the city of Suva — business, diplomatic and academic centre for the South Pacific — as the meeting place of Pacific people.

Increasingly, the composition of the congregation has come to reflect that cultural diversity. On any Sunday there will be students present from the University of the South Pacific, the Fiji School of Medicine, the Fiji Institute of Technology

and the Pacific Theological College. Numerically, there are now the most significant group in the congregation. Their presence and their influence, undoubtedly, hold the key to the future life of this parish.

Apart from the small group of long term residents, most people just pass through. They may only be in church for one Sunday morning, or they may stay a little longer. For some, their presence in Suva means the beginning of a career. For others it is a turning point or stepping stone, as they anticipate promotion on their return 'home'. Yet others are here to offer voluntary service before embarking on a career. Diplomatic missions and international agencies are all represented by personnel who are frequently on the move. Many of these people — if not most — find themselves facing the future with questions about direction and purpose — for themselves, their marriages, their families, their careers, and their place in the wider community.

'A church at the crossroads — what a place to minister!' was my friend's comment. He is right.

Despite its size (and I want to affirm with Erich Schumacher that 'small is beautiful'), St Andrews has made its presence felt. Congregational members take a lead in the various welfare agencies around Suva. Eucumenically active, St Andrews was a founding member of the Fiji Council of Churches. The Pacific Theological College and the Pacific Conference of Churches have also provided areas of service and involvement.

Recently, after a day of reflection, the St Andrews Session felt led to affirm the regional nature of the congregation and pledged itself to explore — in the next year — what that means for the future in practical terms. The elders do not have in mind a 'big deal' public relations exercise to put St Andrews on the map — and I do not anticipate that the answers will come easily to us.

We will have to continue dreaming dreams together, and fleshing them out with specific proposals. It may involve us in a re-examination of our long standing association with the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and exploring, instead, what links we should have with the Pacific churches, whose people give St Andrew's its present character. We may still be given the opportunity to think in terms of ministry to one of the Suva-based, regional institutions.

There are no definite proposals, and no specific suggestions. We need to talk a lot more together — all of us. That in itself will be a new dynamic — difficult, but worthwhile. I suspect that if we do, the emphasis will go off maintenance management and even survival tactics, to an exploration of what it means to serve God in this place, at this time, and so be his people.

The next hundred years could be quite exciting!

Alex. E. Sutherland
August 1983.

MINISTERS OF ST ANDREWS

1883-1884 Rev. J. Lambie
1884 Rev. H.C. Giles
1884-1887 Rev. L.W. Rennison
1888-1896 Rev. W. Gardner
1896-1899 Rev. Rev. Jones
1899-1900 Rev. J. Mathie
1900 Rev. W.P. Matthews
1901-1903 Rev. W.R. Thompson
1904-1907 Rev. D.J. Baillie
1907-1910 Rev. R.M. Legate
1910-1912 Rev. D. Finlayson
1912-1914 Rev. J. Nickholls
1914-1917 Rev. J. Jackson
1917-1920 Rev. W. Moulton
1920-1922 Rev. T. Shanks
1922-1925 Rev. G.L. Johnson
1925-1928 Rev. J. Jackson
1929-1932 Rev. C.W. Turner
1932-1936 Rev. D. McCosh
1936-1942 Rev. A. Hardie
1942-1944 Rev. L.G.B. Whitehead
1944-1948 Rev. J. Watson
1948-1952 Rev. D.N. MacDiarmid
1952-1956 Rev. A.G. Gardiner
1957-1962 Rev. W. McSkimming
1962-1967 Rev. J.T. Gardiner
1968-1973 Rev. E.L. Brodie
1975-1976 Rev. F.W. Winton
1976-1979 Rev. L.R. Miller
1981- Rev A.E. Sutherland

LIST OF SESSION MEMBERS

Rev. Alex E. Sutherland, B.A. B.Thed. — Minister.
Frances Ashby — Session clerk
Ross Plowman — treasurer
David Bell
Donald Burness
David Collison
Brian Derrick
Gweneth Deverell
Kenneth Giblin
Mavis Israel
Ethel Naidu
Uentavo Neemia
Pastor Thomas Niditauae
John Stewart
Ian Thomson
Viliame Tikomaimaleya
Peter Wyatt

Centenary Committee:

Ethel Naidu — chairman
Agnes White — secretary
Don Burness